

# Norway

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## Freedom of the Press

Freedoms of the expression, media freedom, and the right to access government information are guaranteed under Article 100 of Norway's constitution. Defamation is punishable by up to six months in prison, while defaming the king can carry a prison sentence of up to five years. However, these laws are rarely enforced. The Criminal Code prohibits hateful expression, which is punishable by up to three years in prison. Even after the June 2011 terrorist attack carried out by far-right, anti-immigrant militant Anders Behring Breivik, there were no legal steps taken to curb freedom of speech, despite news reports of Breivik's affiliation with and inspiration from various hate sites and blogs. In March 2013, threats made online were included in the Criminal Code and made equal to threats in the public sphere in general. Also during the year, anti-Semitic hate crimes were assigned an independent category in police reports, to facilitate tracking any developments in anti-Semitism in Norway. This came after a 2012 poll showed a rise in anti-Semitic attitudes, which prompted the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to criticize Norwegian officials for inadequately addressing the issue.

Potentially contradictory rulings were issued during the year on the issue of protection of sources. In October 2013 the Supreme Court determined that an editorial director from NRK, the state-owned radio and television public broadcasting company, did not have to reveal the source who had provided confidential police material about the Breivik case. Also in October, in another ruling related to the Breivik case, the Supreme Court found that confidential phone numbers could be used as evidence in criminal cases, even though they may reveal journalists' sources.

The 2006 Freedom of Information Act provides for access to government documents, and the public can request data through an online access portal, the Offentlig Elektronisk Postjournal (OEP). In March 2013, the Supreme Court determined that the press and public should gain access to newly surfaced documents and recordings related to a famous 1985 espionage case against Arne Treholt. The case began in 2011 when several media outlets brought a joint suit against the government in order to gain access to the information, after the Norwegian Police Security Service cited national security concerns for refusing to release the documents.

Threats against journalists and media outlets are rare. In May 2013, the Norwegian Supreme Court upheld the 2012 sentence imposed by an Oslo court on two Muslim residents of Norway found guilty of planning a bomb attack on the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*, which in 2005 had published cartoons of the prophet Muhammad that sparked a controversy across Europe and the Muslim world. The men had also planned to attack the cartoonist who drew the Muhammad cartoons. Their trial began in November 2011, and in February 2012 all three were found guilty and sentenced to up to seven years in prison.

Norway has one of the highest newspaper readerships in the world, and distributes more than 200 newspapers that express a diversity of opinions, many of which are openly partisan. Media concentration is a concern, with three main companies dominating the print sector. Many of the major papers, including *VG*, *Aftenposten*, *Bergens Tidende*, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, and *Fædrelandsvennen* are owned by Schibsted Norge, a successor to the consortium Media Norge that was formed in 2009 after a protracted struggle with the Norwegian Media Authority due to concerns over its size. Competition is still strong, even though the financial downturn has hurt the advertising market. The public broadcaster NRK is dominant in both radio and television and is financed by a license fee, but there is considerable competition from

private broadcasters. News is also provided by the private television channel TV2. The government does not restrict use of the internet, and it was accessed by 95 percent of the population in 2013.

## **2014 Scores**

### **Press Status**

Free

### **Press Freedom Score**

**(0 = best, 100 = worst)**

10

### **Legal Environment**

**(0 = best, 30 = worst)**

3

### **Political Environment**

**(0 = best, 40 = worst)**

3

### **Economic Environment**

**(0 = best, 30 = worst)**

4